

95
95

MAR 17 1937

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



CONTENTS

MARCH, MCMXXXVII

PLAYS OF THE MONTH: BY
IVOR BROWN • MR. GRAN-
VILLE - BARKER'S BOOK ON
HAMLET: REVIEWED BY W.
BRIDGES-ADAMS • FESTIVAL
ADJUDICATION: BY RICHARD
SOUTHERN • ILLUSTRATIONS

6d.

Published by
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
9 FITZROY SQUARE
LONDON
W.1

For Stage or Drawing Room

A New Comedy Duologue

"Lady Jemima's Weekly Thought"

By LEONARD WHITE

1m. 1f. . . . 25 minutes

"Sweet are the uses of adversity." Are they, always, so sweet? 'Lady Jemima,' in one of her weekly contributions to a popular journal, says "yes," urging this point of view on her readers. How far it holds good in the case of two of the latter, a middle-aged and hitherto happily married couple, is set out in "Lady Jemima's Weekly Thought" in entertaining fashion, blending comedy with a touch of sentiment and drama. Good acting opportunities for both characters.

AMATEUR FEE 10/6

Copies 1/1 post free from:-

B.D.L. BOOKSHOP, or from the Publishers:

Samuel French, Ltd.,
26, Southampton St.,
Strand, W.C.2.

(NOTE: This play is included in Harrop's
"Best One-Act Plays of 1936.")

Molyneux

"As Christian practice is, with so few exceptions, the direct opposite of Christian principle, the secret of a moral life is clear. You must reverse your principles."

Mrs. Pontifex (politely) "Revise?"

Molyneux "Reverse: turn 'em all upside down."

How the above process was effected in the case of the Pontifex family, and with what results, is set out in

THE WOODEN IDOL

by

LEONARD WHITE

A Baroque Fantasy in a Prologue and Three Acts
7M. 4F. . . . SIMPLE INTERIOR SCENE

As played at the Ambassadors' Theatre, London,
with Wilfrid Lawson in the leading rôle.

N.B.—This play offers to Repertory Companies and Amateur Dramatic Societies excellent opportunities for creative work in acting and production.
Typescripts 2s. 6d. post free.

from

JAMES B. PINKER & SON,

Talbot House, Arundel Street, Strand, W.C.2.

MISS WEBBER'S

TYPEWRITING OFFICE

PLAYS, PARTS, AUTHORS' MSS., ETC.

VISITING SECRETARIES

DUPLICATING

6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1.

Telephone: Whitehall 8324.

TO LET

for

REHEARSALS, ENTERTAINMENTS, Etc.

SMALL THEATRE (S. Kensington),

Seats 120: Stage 19' x 9'. Full Stage Lighting
and Dimmer, Plain Curtains.

Terms:

Evenings £3-12-6.

Mornings or Afternoons by arrangement.

Extra Room if required; also Large Garden
available during Summer.

Apply:—Box 17, Advert. Dept., "Drama."

Valerie Prentis and Enid Barr

Present

LECTURE DEMONSTRATIONS

on

COSTUME

● CLOTHES AND THE PLAYER.

"From Cote-Hardie to Crinoline."—A lecture demonstration of general interest on costume and movement particularly suited to Drama Schools and Dramatic Societies.

● FOUNDING A STAGE WARDROBE.

Some basic notes on stage costume in a simple demonstration on practical methods of cut and construction.

FOR SCHOOLS

● CLOTHES & HOW THEY WORE THEM.

Some pages from the history of Costume and Manners, presented in such a way as to give life and reality to an unusual subject, arranged to appeal to both Junior and Senior forms.

Other Lectures & Special Coaching can be arranged.

Write for LECTURE SYLLABUS to

10 Chariot Street, St. John's Wood, N.W.8

DRAMA

VOL 15

MARCH, MCMXXXVII

NUMBER 6

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By Ivor Brown

NOBODY could repeat during February the absurd mis-statement that newcomers cannot get a hearing in the West End. Insist as vehemently as you like that these orchard walls are hard to climb. Yet many recruits to play-writing have recently surmounted them. What has become of the fruit we can hardly say yet.

Miss Ingaret Giffard, authoress of "Because We Must" (Wyndham's) was unfortunate to see her play vanish so soon. It described surrender to the social compulsions which guide our lives and may guide them better than we know. Its picture of various feminine types showed insight and humour and most of the parts were charmingly played. Did the construction fail to satisfy? Presumably. That is odd, however, because plenty of ill-constructed plays have done well so long as humanity was in them. Miss Giffard must realise that the West End theatre is always something of a roulette-board. She must come to the table and play again.

Mr. Rex Judd, author of "Suspect" at the St. Martins, has demonstrated the cruelty of the Scottish verdict of 'Non-Proven' by showing how it leaves the recipient without a character and without peace of mind. The case may always be reconsidered and the victim, if not found guilty, is not found innocent either. "Suspect" is about a woman haunted by her past. Justly or unjustly? That is the question which an evening of not very likely but sufficiently exciting interrogation and manœuvre solves at the proper hour of eleven. Miss Mary Morris as the suspect is every inch suspicious but we get no certainty until the last minute which contains its thrill.

The piece may be about a very nasty crime but it is very nicely mounted and performed. Apparently murder is never too horrible for the taste in entertainment of this necrophilous generation.

Mr. Landstone, author of "Behind Your Back" (Strand), is not a newcomer to the theatre, about which he knows everything from the contents of a matinée tea to those of the manager's heart. But he is a newcomer to authorship and most welcome. His amusing and occasionally poignant piece describes what might occur in the dress-circle bar during a performance of a play which is 'flopping.' Fears of unemployment, little dramas of love and hate, displays of temper and temperament, tiresome patrons, muddles and confusions, all these are condensed in an animated and novel entertainment. There are plenty of types here, of course, which actors know by experience and can reproduce with gusto. Mr. Esmé Percy is especially amusing as a manager of grand gestures: but it is a trifle unfair to select one performance. All the characters are vividly presented.

Mr. Stephen Powys's "Wise Tomorrow" (Lyric) received some mixed verdicts because of its mixed style of writing, in which the comedy lines were deemed by some to be irrelevant to the play's better purpose, but there was common acknowledgement of brilliance in the air and the ticket agencies endorsed the opinion that a new talent had been found.

In a very busy week I missed "The Ripening Wheat" (Royalty), in which another new dramatist bravely endeavoured to convince

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

the West End that a Welsh love-story of the eighteenth century could renew our loyalty to the theatre of romance. In "Come Out to Play" (Arts) Miss Fanny Jocelyn and Mr. John Sand argued the case for frank sex-instruction in schools. Their play seemed rather too simple to earn promotion to a public theatre: but it had a likeable integrity and spoke sense. Mr. Arthur McCrea, whose "Tavern in the Town" was very brightly handled in Mr. Murray Macdonald's production at the Embassy, is no new hand or member of the awkward squad. Life in the 'upstairs' of a small Mayfair Hotel, or glorified pub, yielded a great deal of fun as well as some not so convincing adventures. Miss Margaret Rutherford, in one of her grand assumptions of old-maidenly irascibility, swept the comedy scenes triumphantly along.

So much for new plays. The old, too, have more than held their own. The revival of "Candida" proved a great success. Miss Ann Harding may not be everybody's idea of Candida, but she will conform to most people's notion of that quiet and dominant lady. Her emotional hold over the last act has been under-rated by those who felt that she was insufficiently commanding and dynamic at first. Mr. Edward Chapman, with Mr. Shaw's permission to play Burgess in Yorkshire accent, makes glorious use of this odd privilege. Mr. Nicholas Hannen is Morell in everything that matters, if not in physical bulk. Miss Athene Seyler's Prossy is grand, and Mr. Stephen Haggard is described by those with long memories as the best of all the Eugenes, including Mr. Granville Barker himself. And how good the play remains, Shaw at his nimblest in wit and most human in sympathy.

Lastly a word of unqualified rapture over Miss Edith Evans's performance of Rosalind in "As You Like It" (New). Her verve, her mischief, her perfect comprehension of how to speak a verse or point a quip have created a figure which will quiver and tingle in the memory long after most of my playgoing of 1937 has been forgotten.

Several well-known Drama Schools are collaborating in a Mime Festival which will be held in the Rudolf Steiner Hall, London, on Saturday, March 13th, at 3 p.m. Tickets from the Secretary, 47, Clock House Road, Beckenham, Kent.

THE TOY THEATRE

By Gerald Morice

THE toy theatre has recently been 'news' again and while to many people this has been the substantiation of a memory, many others, perhaps, have but little idea of what is meant or implied.

The toy theatre is essentially a nineteenth century product, although, of course, it has also present day uses. It is essentially a replica of the human theatre, the characters and scenes being drawn or printed on paper, then mounted on cardboard and cut out. A certain degree of convention is required, for there can be but little movement on the part of the figures which are controlled from the sides. The ensuing stylisation need not be too much of a drawback, but can indeed attain a positive value in, say, the portrayal of narrative. The toy theatre has had and still has a very great many friends, well known and otherwise. Thus Dickens, Millais, Ellen Terry, Winston Churchill, G. K. Chesterton, all had toy theatres. The "toy" or "paper" theatre was and is still very popular abroad.

In England it had in its printed state an especially attractive form with one hundred and twenty-five years history, the earliest known sheets of scenes and characters being dated 1811. Publication proceeded on a creative scale until well into the 'sixties. At the time of "the theatre madness," in the 'thirties and 'forties,—the Licensing Act was repealed in 1843—there were a number of "publishers," for the makers seemed to have preferred to distinguish themselves thus from other "jobbing printers." The first publisher was probably "W. West, Strand," who had the Cruikshanks to work for him. The sheets were printed off copper plates; later—and by other publishers—lithography was used. Finally, woodcut productions contributed largely to the decline, which, with the march of science and its introduction to the children's sphere, would probably have set in of itself.

In the half century of the English toy theatre's favour, most of the successes of the "Human" theatre received translation and some degree of immortality in the 'paper' theatre. Shakespeare, the Italian Opera, "Tom and Jerry, or Life in London," Pierce Egan's panorama of the fast life of the time, the

THE TOY THEATRE

"Shockers" and the Pantomimes are depicted. The Coronation of H.M. King George IV. was illustrated. The features of famous actors, actresses, comedians and clowns were also delineated, and of these the English toy theatre provides an extraordinarily accurate representation.

The artists went to the "patent" theatres, the Theatres Royal and the "minor" houses, and there made sketches and notes, which they later amplified and transferred on to copper and stone. The toy theatre is not only a kind of 'theatrical museum in miniature'; in its scenery and figures it is a record of the life and times, modes and manners. The London of the Nineteenth Century stands reviewed. Old Westminster Bridge, the streets of Clerkenwell, the old Old Bailey, the Royal Exchange, the small multi-paned windows of the shop fronts and the streets are all there, awaiting the waving of Harlequin's magic wand to be transformed into something still different for the merry pranks of Clown and Pantaloon.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in the "Magazine of Art" for 1884, an essay "Penny Plain, Twopence Coloured," later to be reprinted in a volume of collected papers, "Memories and Portraits." He wrote of his own childhood's toy theatre and its delights, and went on to eulogise one, Skelt, a publisher in the Minorities, just off Tower Hill. Skelt of course did a great deal of work in the 'forties and 'fifties, but it was in no way more outstanding than that of many other publishers. I have a feeling that the very sound of his name must have especially appealed to Stevenson, for it is a toy theatre name. Stevenson further mentioned one of the only two existent publishers, saying "If you love art, folly and the bright eyes of children, speed to Pollocks." This advice has been recently re-echoed, for this same Mr. B. Pollock celebrated, on November 10th, his eightieth birthday.

In the little shop in Hoxton, just beyond the City and in the shadow of the great Britannia Theatre, the Drury Lane of the East End, where so many plays were produced of that type of drama on which the toy theatre thrived, Mr. Pollock has now for sixty years, been printing and colouring the Juvenile Drama. He married into the trade. His father-in-law was J. Reddington, to whose business he succeeded. Reddington himself was for many years a toy theatre publisher and had taken

over the stock-in-trade, including the plates, of other publishers, as did later Mr. Pollock.

The value of Mr. Pollock's work lies in the fact that he is the conservator of toy theatre tradition. Mr. Pollock did not originate but, with simplicity and with unswerving tenacity of purpose, he has carried on. In appreciation of Mr. Pollock's life and works, the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild recently arranged a complimentary Exhibition of the "Paper Theatre at Home and Abroad" at its headquarters at the George Inn, Southwark. It received a private view-opening by Mr. J. B. Priestley and a number of invited guests, when too Mr. Robert Speaight read Stevenson's essay, and Mr. G. V. Speaight gave a performance on a toy theatre. The Exhibition was visited by over five hundred people.

CONTINENTAL DIARY.

U.S.S.R.

Outstanding Plays now in production in Moscow and elsewhere include the following:—

MODERN SOVIET PLAYS.

"Big Day," by Vladimir Kirschon. Vakhtangov Theatre, Moscow, and 48 theatres in other cities. Theme: The war of the future. 5 acts.

"Florisdorf," by Friedrich Wolf. Vakhtangov Theatre, Moscow, and 6 theatres in other cities. A social tragedy in three acts. Theme: Uprising of the Vienna working-class.

"Fame," by Victor Gussev. Maly Theatre, and the Central Theatre of the Red Army in Moscow, and in 38 theatres in other cities. Theme: The Bolshevik conception of fame and friendship. The action takes place among officers of the Soviet Air Fleet. 2 acts, 8 scenes.

"College Students" ("Gymnazisty"), by Constantin Treniev. Central State Children's Theatre, Moscow, and 5 theatres in other cities. Deals with an old pre-revolutionary school in a provincial town on the eve of 1905. 7 scenes.

PARIS.

As all the world knows an International Exhibition is to be held in Paris from May to September this year. A special feature will be the Theatre Section, and the Théâtre des Champs Elysées has been placed at the disposal of various countries for the performance of plays.

The English representation will occur for two weeks from June 14th to 26th. As already announced, one week will be devoted to a season of Ballet from Sadlers Wells. Particulars as to the second week will be announced in due course, the arrangements being in the hands of the British Council for Cultural Relations.

(See also page 97.)

A THEATRE FOR TODAY: II

By R. Rivington Holmes

A FEW months ago an article appeared in these columns, under a similar title, describing a new type of stage with a curved proscenium and a fan-shaped auditorium. The present article deals with the application of this idea to a small size of stage, such as may be found in many parts of the country to-day.

In order to make the account of practical value a concrete example has been taken and it should be easy to adapt these ideas to suit other conditions as required. In the case under consideration it is proposed to convert the loft and harness rooms above an old stable, and the original lines of the structure are shown in full on Fig. 1. For reasons of expense as little structural alteration as possible is contemplated, in fact the cutting of an opening in the partition wall between the two small rooms and the erection of a light front, with a doorway, to each dressing room completes the alterations as far as the stage part is concerned.

Separating the main loft from the small rooms is a permanent wall which fixes the position of the back of the stage: the position of the centre of the front curtain is decided by the position of the nearest roof-truss (above No. 1. on Elevation, Section BB, Fig. 1.), from which it has to be supported. This leaves an auditorium which, as shown, holds only about fifty seats; it is possible, however, that extra space can be thrown in at the back of the auditorium and so enable the seating to be brought up to about one hundred and thirty.

The stage itself is very minute but by arranging the sides and curtains on the lines shown it is possible to make use of every available inch of space.

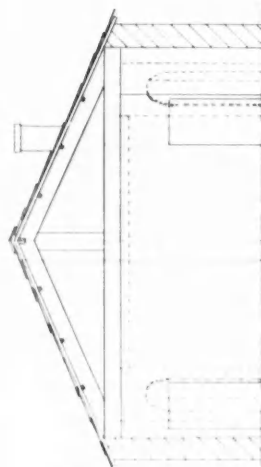
The equipment suggested consists of three sets of dividing curtains—the front and traverse curtains drawing back along curved rods or rails, while the back curtains draw straight across the rear wall. The runners and gear for these curtains are supported from the roof-truss at the front of the stage and from the three beams (shown dotted) running from this to the back wall. The fore-stage, to which there are two simple curtained side entrances set in inclined wings, can be utilised as part of the acting area when the main curtains are open as well as in its true capacity when these are shut.

The curving of the front curtains enables furniture to be set well down-stage while they are closed for a front scene, and the curve of the traverse curtains leaves just sufficient space for an actor to make a central entry at the back.

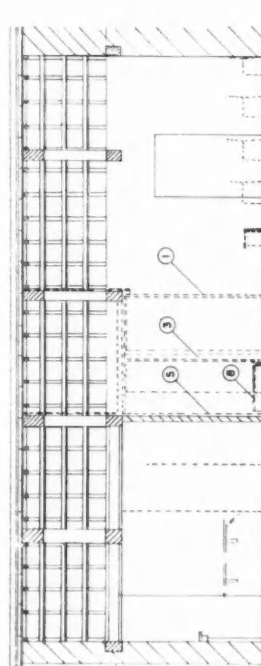
Owing to the lack of space in the wings for scenery, properties and furniture, two special revolving doorways have been devised: these can be made to serve several purposes and remain permanently in position. One of these is sketched in Fig. 2: it will be seen to consist of two door-jambs and a lintel, pivoted at the top and bottom, with a pair of curtains on one side. When the device is in the position shown it can be used as a doorway—an entry being made through the curtains—but when it is reversed the curtains form part of the wall of a curtain set. Other conversions, to a window, a fireplace, or a book-case, easily suggest themselves and such preparation can be made during a scene when only the curtain side is visible to the audience.

In the very front of the fore-stage is shown a permanent bench: this is a device which might prove of some value as not only does it solve the problem of having more seats on the stage than one has room to store behind, but it also provides, in front scenes, a seat for the actor who so often has nothing to do but listen to the other's confidences. The bench is of course, so low as to be entirely out of the picture in those scenes in which it is not being used. The entrances to the fore-stage have been curved partly in order to make the entrance easier and partly for the sake of appearance—a curtain hung in folds and curved produces rich shadows and is less formal than one hung across the opening in a straight line.

The two masking curtains between the traverse and the back wall should allow the actors to make an exit or entry there when absolutely necessary, but the space in this instance is extremely cramped. The back wall itself would be plastered white and, as it is not a large area, several alternative stylised back-cloths might be used with advantage in certain types of play. No great effect of distance can be expected, but it is surprising what can be done with even the smallest stage when it is skilfully lit.



Elevation A.A.



Elevation B.B.

Note Full Lines indicate existing structure Short-dashed Lines indicate additions Long-dotted Lines on plan show positions of roof-trusses.

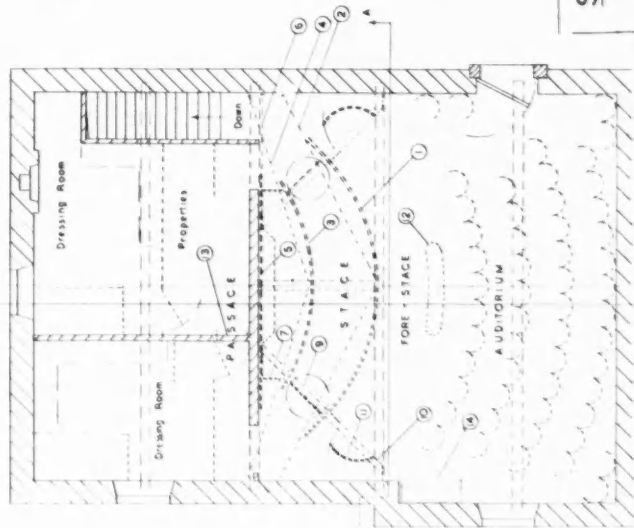
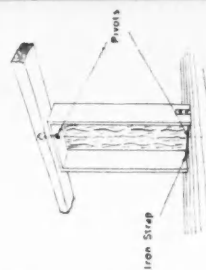


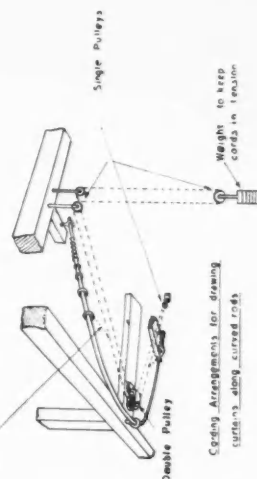
FIG. 2.



Roughing Doorway.

Key to Numbering	
1	Dividing Front Curtains
2	Control Cords to Front Curtains
3	Dividing Traverse Curtains
4	Control Cords to Traverse Curtains
5	Back Curtains
6	Control Cords to Back Curtains
7	Reaching Curtains
8	Small Applique
9	Reaching Doorway Curtain-Reverse Side
10	Wings to Fore-stage
11	Entrance to Fore-stage
12	Reaching Bench
13	Doorway Cut in Partition-Wall
14	Miniature Piano

Links to secure lat ring to control cord



Cording Arrangements for drawing curtains along curved rods

FIG. 3.

FIG. 1.

SMALL BARN THEATRE WITH CURVED CURTAINS



FINAL SCENE FROM "PICKWICK'S CLUB"
PRODUCED BY ALEXANDER WEGIERKO, AT
THE POLSKI THEATRE, WARSAW, 1936.

A THEATRE FOR TODAY

This brings us to the Lighting, a most important point, and the construction of the hall, in this case, offers considerable scope for the erecting of lighting equipment in various positions, both in front of and over the stage. Simple home-made equipment if properly designed* will be quite suitable for a stage of this size, although some of the smaller commercial articles are to be recommended. As a suggestion the following equipment might be used, the number of the circuits and the dimming arrangements depending on the money available for this section of the theatre's fittings.

- (1) A Front-of House Batten, consisting of three floods grouped together in the centre, and two spotlights one each to the right and left, all mounted on the roof-truss in the middle of the auditorium.
- (2) An Acting-Area Batten of two lanterns over the space between the front and traverse curtains.
- (3) An Up-stage Batten of four lanterns in advance of the back wall and a trough of two lanterns at the foot in the cut-away portion of the small rostrum.
- (4) Four Plugs, two to either side for Floods outside windows or other effects.

The fore-going equipment is on a fairly generous scale and a great deal could be done with less; in all cases, however, the lights should be so arranged as to throw downwards on to the acting area and not on to the back-ground (excepting the batten and trough arranged for that purpose) as at these small distances shadows are sharp and very difficult to 'kill.' Footlights, you will notice, have been entirely omitted from this scheme: they are hardly necessary on a stage of this size and would only cause trouble with severe shadows both on players and on the backcloth.

The producer who has to make use of a stage of this type must accept its limitations and direct all his energies into making the most of its advantages. Properties and furniture will have to be small and light, costumes must be well chosen and able to stand close scrutiny, while the lighting must be used to give the curtain set the correct 'atmosphere.' The

curtains themselves should preferably be of a colour that takes the light well such as light grey, although deeper colours may be used with success if the lighting is sufficiently strong, or in order to produce a particular effect in one play.

Finally the author would ask anyone who is sufficiently interested to contemplate fixing up something on these lines to communicate with him: the disposal of the Provisional Patent has not yet been arranged and permission must be obtained to construct or use any device which comes within its scope. The author would also be glad to give any help or advice he could with the adaptation, and would be most interested to hear reports of subsequent productions on this type of stage.

MR. PICKWICK IN POLAND.

Dramatized novels are popular in Poland, but few of them have enjoyed greater success than "Pickwick's Club" at the Teatr Polski during the 1936 Christmas period and afterwards. Mr. Alexander Wegierko was the producer and also the author of the dramatization, which was only partly based on N. Wegstern's text. Speaking of his work Mr. Wegierko said: "Dickensian characters are for me not puppets, or perfectly absurd figures from an impossible story. They are genuine men and women of blood and flesh... They should not be mechanized. To interpret them an artist should go through the same process of internal adaptation that is acknowledged to be necessary for the playing of modern plays, of the so-called psychological type."

That principle was certainly realised by Mr. Zelwerowicz, one of the leading actors of Poland, in the role of Mr. Pickwick, as well as by the rest of the cast.

The sets of Daszewski were designed with a view to retaining some characteristics of the Dickensian period without overburdening it with detail. More realism was to be found in the costumes by Sophie Wegierko. The task of producing the atmosphere of the period rested, beside acting itself mainly with the music, which was carefully selected and composed for the whole play. Old waltzes and other tunes discreetly permeated the audience with the instinctive feeling of the period atmosphere, assisted by such things as the sound of the postman's trumpet and other details.

As to the dramatization, the task of the Polish producer was perhaps a trifle easier than that of his English colleague, for the Warsaw public, less familiar with the Pickwick story than its London counterpart, tolerates greater liberties taken with it by the producer. Mr. Wegierko strived after a certain unity, to be achieved even at the cost of very serious abridgements of the original. The plot is concentrated round Mr. Pickwick's conflict with Mr. Bardell, and some prominence is given to the love element. This curtailing of the original story was meant to reproduce the smooth flow of its narrative on the stage, which would have been impossible if more detail had been indulged in.

* There are several books on this subject in the British Drama League Library.

STAGE FIGHTS

By Arthur Bracegirdle

FIGHTS with weapons on the stage are very often badly produced and badly played, not because the producer and actors are not prepared to take pains with this part of their show, but because they have the idea that a knowledge of fencing is necessary for staging a fight. Such knowledge is useful but not indispensable, or even always desirable. Only a very small proportion of the fencing in plays dates after 1800, and the methods which ought to be used bear little or no resemblance to modern foil play, so that the complete novice has the advantage over the experienced fencer in that he has not to learn new movements.

It is a great help in the production of a stage fight to consider it from the point of view of costume, movement, and character. The weapons used must be in period; the actual fighting must conform more or less to the methods used in the period which the play depicts and the bearing of each player must be in tune with his general characteristics in the play.

The weapons used may be divided roughly into the following periods: the Middle Ages, (b) 1500 to 1625, (c) 1625 to 1680, (d) 1680 to 1789 and (e) 1789 onwards.

Very few fights set in the Middle Ages occur except in pageants and the weapons used, the two handed and single handed swords, flails, morning stars, maces, axes, bills, quarterstaves, etc., will all be used with swinging blows, without any special method of offence or defence.

From 1500 to 1625 a long rapier is the commonest weapon, used generally with a dagger or cloak; and from 1625 to 1680 a shortened rapier used alone.

The period from 1680 to 1789 is the time of the smallsword and from 1789 onwards only a modern *épée de combat* or military sabre will be used.

For all weapons used before 1500 the following target is probably the easiest to learn. Imagine on each fencer's chest a clock face on which only the numbers at 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 o'clock are marked. The attacks will consist of swinging blows; two oblique downwards to 1 and 11; two oblique upwards to 5 and 7 and two horizontal blows to 3 and 9. The attacks will be guarded in a perfectly

natural way as one would defend oneself with a walking stick.

In order to use the rapier correctly for the period 1500 to 1625, the player must neglect all modern ideas of fencing. The Elizabethans fought with both hands and a very easy way of striking the correct attitude is to fall into the modern boxing stance and to move constantly on both feet, feinting continually with the left hand which holds the dagger point upwards. This dagger hand is used chiefly for defence or for delivering a blow at close quarters. The real attacks come from the sword in the right hand. The target for this kind of fencing is the body from shoulder to hips, divided into four quarters, 1 and 2 on the left side, 3 and 4 on the right. Thrusts, and thrusts only, are the only attacks, those on the left being put aside by the dagger, and those to the right by the sword, used to defend the right shoulder with the point upwards, and for the right hip with the point down. The rapier should be held with the first and second fingers locked over the quillons or cross-guard.

The transition period, from 1625 to 1680, was a time when a shortened rapier was used alone. The attacks and guards for this kind of fencing will be the same as for the rapier and dagger, except that the thrust to the left will be put aside with the left hand or with the sword. A gauntlet may be worn on the left hand.

For the smallsword, used from 1680 to 1789, the same simple target, attacks and guards can be used, but the fencers must stand on guard in the modern way, except that the sword will be held just above the right hip, with the hand turned over and the point slightly raised. The left elbow should be carried rather further forward than is usual nowadays, so that the hand can be used for sweeping off thrusts to the left side.

Simple foil will suffice for a modern duel dated any time after 1789, but if the players cannot fence, the smallsword method outlined above will be satisfactory in its effects.

Fights with the sabre are rare on the stage, but if one is to be played, it is advisable to dispense with all thrusts and to use the target and swinging blows which are used for the mediæval weapons. The path of the blows,

STAGE FIGHTS

however, should be shorter, and the player should come on guard with the left hand behind his back and the right arm almost fully extended, with the hand turned over to the left, and the point of the sabre slightly lowered.

The production of a fight on the stage needs very careful attention. It is for the producer to read the text carefully and to note any points which do not appear to be explained by our modern ideas of fencing, and to note also any definite instructions in the text. If he does this he will not fall into the common errors, such as playing the fight in Hamlet with foils, when Osric has definitely said that it will be fought with rapier and dagger. Next, the position of the players at the beginning of the fight must be decided, and, what is more important still, their position at the finish. The players should have written parts, giving the blows, indicated by the numbers on the target and the guard for each blow marked. These numbers and target, chalked on two blackboards, one at each end of the stage, are useful during the early rehearsals. By this means the players can see their instructions at a glance from any position. The fight should be first walked through, without weapons, and then with weapons, gradually increasing the speed. A good finish to a fight is essential, and the most effective way is to place the winner so that, when he delivers the final blow, he is masking the loser. In rapier and dagger fencing it is usually easier to finish with the dagger, as this brings the opponents closer together, and makes masking easier. In order to avoid accidents the first rehearsals should be played with sticks, and in masks. This gives a feeling of safety, which will help the players considerably in making the fight vigorous and effective. Only for the last three or four rehearsals should the masks be removed and real weapons used. The points of the swords should be bound with insulating tape. If the players are fencing well and effectively, it is a good plan to polish the blades, but if the fighting is inclined to be slow, polished hilts will tend to draw the attention of the audience away from the movements of the blades.

The methods of production scantily outlined here contain no technical terms, and no knowledge of fencing is necessary, but the producer must be prepared to work slowly and methodically, and the players must be conscious that

they are not merely fencing a bout, but that every blow and counter blow must be acted.

THE ENGLISH ONE-ACT PLAY

"Der Moderne Englische Einakter, 1900-1935."
By Alfons Hartmann. Albert Becht, Tübingen.

There have been books on the technique of the one-act play (American) and many books on present day drama but it is from a German author that we get the first survey of the modern English one-act play.

Looking only at the professional theatre in England, it is not surprising that no one has thought it worth while to write the history of the one-act play. Apart from a few isolated seasons, such as the Grand Guignol of the Thordykes and only last year the Noel Coward, the one-act play has almost ceased to exist on the professional stage. In spite of this, Herr Hartmann has noticed the tremendous growth of the one-act play, and the part it plays in the life of the community, and he has chosen this subject for his inaugural dissertation for his doctorate. It is no exhaustive history, nor is it critical analysis but rather he surveys what this century has so far afforded, with the purpose of stimulating further investigations into a subject he finds so full of possibilities.

After an introductory chapter, in which Herr Hartmann remarks that even now the one-act play is not looked on as a work of art but as a mere sketch or curtain-raiser, he begins his history with an outline of the one-act play in Ireland. Reviewing the work of the early Abbey dramatists, he finds the first masterpieces of the one-act play form. Thence he turns to Wales, to the Aberystwyth group of playwrights, and pays tribute to the work of Lord Howard de Walden. Finally, he comes to England and Scotland, and to the vast work of the amateur theatre under the co-ordinating influence of the British Drama League.

Throughout his book, he stresses the influence of the Liebhaberbühne, the amateur stage, and in this connection he comments on the large part played by women, both as organisers of the movement and leaders of dramatic groups. Not only are they numerically stronger, but their influence is more felt than that of men. The newer playwrights have considered this and often three-quarters of their personnel is feminine. In comparison with his own country, Herr Hartmann interpolates, the Englishwoman has more time to busy herself with hobbies than the German woman.

Regarding the great number of plays now written for people they will attract or merely for the cast at hand, he remarks on the damaging effect of these limitations on the play as a work of art. But by this method, Herr Hartmann suggests, the author may arouse interest in all classes of people, and from being interested they will become critical, and hence he visualises an eventual improvement in the play.

Herr Hartmann has written a sound and interesting book, telling us what was mostly known before, but for the first time in concrete form.

H. M. GARNHAM.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
INCORPORATING
THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

President :

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN

Chairman of the Council :

VISCOUNT ESHER

Director : GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer : ALEC L. REA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

Telephone : MUSEUM 5022.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE 1937 Festival is now in full swing. Reports are already to hand from several centres which, in spite of several last-moment withdrawals on account of influenza, show an encouraging state of affairs. In London particularly the new system by which Festivals are held in local halls rather than in a centralised theatre has already been shown to be justified. The financial result of last year's Festivals in London was disappointing, but we are informed that this year, for the first time, the preliminaries are likely to show an actual profit. Of the artistic standard it is too early yet to speak, but we hope it will be at least as high as in previous years. Readers may like to note the following dates in their diaries. Area Finals : Eastern (Scala Theatre, London). Monday, May 3rd. Western : Bristol, Saturday, May 1st. Northern, at Buxton on Saturday, May 1st. Scotland, Inverness, April

8th-10th. The National Final will take place on Monday, May 31st, at the Old Vic.

We have prepared a 6-page folder-prospectus, printed in colours, which gives in handy form a complete view of the activities of the British Drama League with particular reference to Community Drama Work. This folder will be found very suitable for propaganda on behalf of the League, either through County Committees or by such individual members as are good enough to take part in our effort to extend knowledge of the League among those countless individuals and Societies who would benefit from membership. Those who are able to distribute some of these folders are invited to communicate with Headquarters, when such supplies will be sent as they feel can be profitably disposed of. We may add that a large number have been printed for the purpose of distribution at play performances, lectures, or on other suitable occasions.

We have received from Messrs. Samuel French an attractive brochure describing the work of this well-known firm which has done so much to provide the Amateur Theatre with ammunition in the form of "plays to act." The booklet reminds us that the business was founded in the eighteen-thirties by an actor named Lacey, and that it was as early as 1872 that Mr. French arrived from America where he had, some eighteen years previously, formed a similar concern in New York. He acquired the business and settled down to make a speciality of it. As is well known, the firm opened a branch in Manchester in 1934, and of late years its growth has been continuous and phenomenal. We have no doubt that Messrs. French will be pleased to send a copy of this well-produced and illustrated brochure to any reader applying to them at 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

Readers should visit the Three Day Shakespeare Festivity at 16, Bruton Street, London, W.1., which will be open from March 9th-11th. A fine collection of Shakespeareana will be on view, and in the afternoons there will be Debates, Sherry parties, etc. Full prospectus free from the Drama League.

A PREFACE TO HAMLET

Reviewed by W. Bridges-Adams.

"Hamlet." By Harley Granville-Barker. Sidgwick and Jackson. 10s. 6d.

TO read this, the latest, the most ambitious and—let it at once be said—the best of Mr. Granville-Barker's "Prefaces to Shakespeare," is to be set wondering anew what really constitutes achievement in the theatre. "Posthumous" Prefaces they have been styled, by those who mourned the author's premature withdrawal from the stress of management. Yet these graceful, tautly written records of what he might have done remain on our shelves, and in our hands, with Bradley and Gervinus; they will assuredly outlive the memory of his twenty-odd years of active service, significant though that was.

It is a singular virtue of this book that, while it cannot fail to give commentators a wholesome respect for actors (there is little in its three hundred pages that one mummer might not say, in his own fashion, to another) it reminds the actor that he is himself the final and chief commentator, and a highly responsible person. For the rest, Mr. Granville-Barker's procedure is sound and simple. From first to last we are held within the four walls of a theatre. True, it is a theatre co-extensive with life itself, and by no means impatient of scholarship. But in it the author holds full sway; and in it he will suffer no utterance, utterance, thought or feeling of which the meaning and the spirit are not understood. What he seeks, and achieves, is clarity. He doubts not that, let the rational animal once stand erect on his two legs, all things shall be added unto him. As if in proof of this, he stages for us an ideal shadow-production of the play; and this forms the major portion of his book. It is indeed a shadow-production; for the first time in this series there is, wisely, no chapter on trappings. An Elizabethan fluidity of setting is broadly hinted at, but he will have no red-herrings. Act and scene headings are similarly discarded; we see the play with the mind's eye—his mind's. Even to those who know, or think they know, the play backwards this proves an unexpectedly vivid experience. Those who have produced it or played in it may well feel that they are listening to a grim roll-call of missed opportunities. What is more important, we cannot ponder long over this section of the work

without understanding once for all that the Moscow Art Theatre did not spend six months in the preparation of their "Hamlet" from innate slovenliness, but that it is we who are the slovens when we attempt to stage the play in three weeks.

"The Genius of the Workshop" is an illuminating phrase for the Shakespeare who "wrote up" the existing melodrama. It is in terms of this craftsman's obligation to incorporate the old structure in the new that Mr. Granville-Barker explains what has always been (to one reader at least) the latent unsatisfactoriness of "Hamlet": a noble pile, not a Parthenon. He explains it, but he does not explain it away. William Poel shewed us, in "Fratricide Punished"—that curious recollected version of the earlier play, how Ophelia's mad scenes originated in a song-and-dance *divertissement*, stuck in where the plot threatened to flag, like the ballet in a Meyerbeer opera. Can any Ophelia to-day make us quite forget this, once we know it? Can Mr. Granville-Barker? Or Laertes: his twopenny rebellion and subsequent vacillations, barely playable (Terriss was the best ever) by an actor of brain as well as heart? One may doubt it. At such moments Mr. Granville-Barker's perceptiveness does not slacken; he is too good at his job for that. No, it becomes more acute—too acute: he is "nursing" a difficult patch.

He is at his happiest when, free of any such necessity for special pleading, he can pour out the torrent of his ideas. They come in full spate, point following point, points yet more subtly foreshadowed and echoed, and every one of them there in the text and waiting to be acted. In the last scene of all—too often a scrambling affair—they come with a rapidity which is almost baffling. And herein lies the only other criticism which it is possible to make. It is on the score of playing time. Was not Mr. Granville-Barker among those seduced by the innocent *two hours' traffic of our stage* into playing Shakespeare at an almost incredible number of lines a minute? He pleads implicitly for the full version; after this book we shall ask for nothing less. We shall want the Dumb Show—here for the first time made wholly understandable; there is not one of his points we shall gladly sacrifice.

A PREFACE TO HAMLET

The full text can be got through (it is the word) in perhaps four hours; but at that rate can one half of them survive? On the other hand, if we are to sit five hours in a theatre and savour the finish as it should be played, we shall require something superlative in the way of presentation, as we do from the "Ring."

The full-length "Hamlet" is no longer a novelty in the everyday theatre; the most recent instance played to full houses for several weeks. But no one would pretend that the perfection of performance which Mr. Granville-Barker incites us to demand from even small-part actors is within the resources of the average manager,—least of all of the repertory manager, who is as a rule restricted by heart-breaking limitations. It seems that this and the former problem await solution by some exemplary production yet to come. Considerations of time and money must not enter into it; and the cast must play with the ensemble of a Vienna orchestra. We know where to look for a producer.

To the analysis of the play as played there succeeds an engaging piece of detective work, with Mr. Granville-Barker as the sleuth and Q1, Q2 as the quarry. This is followed by a note on the prose and the verse, and their interaction, which should be compulsory reading for all who profess to give instruction in such matters. It will alternately excite the reader and annoy him to the point of exclaiming that a man who could say *that* would find harmony and assonance in a column of Bradshaw—which is, of course, precisely what an artist should be able to do.

Finally, there are studies of the characters. Of these it must suffice to say that all are justly appraised, and some—notably Gertrude and Horatio—rescued from stock treatment, and that the author earns the gratitude of all young actors by being quite frank about Rosencrants and Guildenstern. With Hamlet himself the book ends on a note of nobility, befitting its theme, which has been increasingly audible throughout: there is positively the emanation of a good nature, no less than a good mind, from the printed page.

There are handsome acknowledgments to, and one brief skirmish with, Professor Dover Wilson.

Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth's "Haunted Houses" will be performed for three nights, beginning Monday, March 15th, by the Hendon Little Theatre Society, at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, London.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by F. SLADEN-SMITH.

- "The Unexpected Years." By Laurence Housman. Cape. 10s. 6d.
 "Common Sense about Drama." By L. A. G. Strong. Nelson. 2s. 6d.
 "Practical Play Production." By Mary Richards. Evans Brothers. 4s. 6d.
 "I Have Five Daughters." By Margaret Macnamara. Play Rights and Publications. 2s.
 "Eastward in Eden." By Nora Ratcliff. Nelson. 3s. 6d.
 "Community Plays." Edited by Nora Ratcliff. Nelson. 1s. 9d.
 "Three Industrial Plays." By Roger Dattler. Nelson. 1s. 6d.
 "Midsummer Night's Dream." Arranged by Leslie Green. Nelson. 7d.
 "She Stoops to Conquer." Arranged by Nora Ratcliff. Nelson. 7d.
 "Puppetry & Puppet Plays." By Arthur B. Allen. Allman and Son. 6s.
 "New Plays for Boys and Girls." By A. I. L. King. Evans Brothers. 2s. 9d.

MR. Laurence Housman's writings are so much a part of the life of many of us, that one begins his autobiography, "The Unexpected Years," with keen anticipation. There will be no disappointment; the events and personalities which have crossed the writer's path are dealt with in just that spirit of gentle delight that we have come to know so well. Mr. Housman considers his life has not been adventurous; he points out that major calamities have not come his way; nevertheless, much depends on the attitude to life itself. Not everyone would be so just or so kindly disposed to some of the events depicted; there is no grousing, for instance, over the slender income of the first years in London, and few would deal so dispassionately with the strange expulsion from a theatre at the request of Mr. Curzon, or present some of the incidents in the Suffrage campaign or the war with such measured temperance. There is, of course, much in the book of the Suffrage movement, and there may well be a little disappointment expressed at the rather negligible result of so much energy. Also, as was to be expected, the Censor makes several important appearances—Mr. Housman has had no less than thirty-two plays censored, and this, in itself, constitutes one of the most severe criticisms of the censorship possible. To many, a feature of the volume will be its vivid picture of the late Victorian era in the first section, but to the present reviewer, having just missed a Victorian childhood, the account of the constant repressions and the imbecilities of school life, combined with the general mixture of smugness and cruelty, is more painful than amusing. But, throughout, no matter what events are described, it is a thoughtful, tranquil book, and we may well be thankful that the author has been able, during these unexpected years, to bask lovingly in the memories of an obviously happy and valuable life.

"Common Sense about Drama" by L. A. G. Strong, is a comparatively small collection of essays, but the ideas expressed are so many and so stimulating, that, at the end, one feels that most aspects of the drama have

RECENT BOOKS

been touched upon, and sometimes freshly illuminated by the author's searching mind. It may be a far cry from the interpretation of dreams to the question of three-dimensional stage setting, but Mr. Strong takes both in his stride as well as the problems of production, acting, reaction of the audience and the psychology and history of the theatre. "Un-common Sense about Drama" might be a poor title, but it would be more truly descriptive of this delightful little book.

It is no detriment to Miss Mary Richard's book, "Practical Play Production," to state that most of it has been said before, because, until we have a completely new theory of stagecraft, the subject has been fairly well explored already. But Miss Richards deals with the matter in a straightforward manner; it is impossible to agree with every statement, but the general information is sound, and covers the whole theory and practice of production, including lighting, scenic construction and make-up. The illustrations are a noteworthy feature of the book. They are not the usual tiny, muddled affairs, but are large, clear and interesting—especially beautiful are some settings by the Wells Repertory Players.

Miss Margaret Macnamara has every right to contribute to the prevailing fashion for Jane Austen plays. "Elizabeth Refuses," her extract from "Pride and Prejudice" is well enough known, and now she sets forth to present one more dramatization of the whole novel. Ingenuity has been shown in compressing the entire action within the Morning-room at Longbourn (varied weather outside giving contrast!), and, perhaps because of this, Mrs. Bennet appears to be the best part in the play, while Darcy, and, to some extent, the dear girls themselves, take a more subordinate place than might be expected. This is a very playable piece; simple, amusing, and with gentle touches of atmosphere which the immortal Jane herself would have been the first to appreciate.

"Eastward in Eden" by Mrs. Nora Ratcliff, contains plays of varied types, of which the best is surely the one which gives the book its title; a Garden of Eden play of forceful and courageous beauty and very striking when acted. There is also an expressionist play, "We Got Rhythm"; bound to delight the heart of producers, but, although also very striking, its effects are vitiated by a somewhat unsatisfactory ending. Three of the plays are for community work, and here Mrs. Ratcliff displays considerable knowledge of the subject, both in her introduction and in the plays themselves.

It is not surprising to find Mrs. Ratcliff editing a book of "Community Plays," and also a series of plays for school and community centres. The "Community Plays" are designed to meet the requirements of large casts, and are supplemented by notes for production and acting which, in some cases, are more interesting than the plays themselves, which, however worthy they may be, suggest that originality of outlook is not a necessary qualification for this type of work. However, the book contains Mr. Dan Totheroh's incomparable "The Stolen Prince," so we must not complain. In the same series are "Three Industrial Plays" by Mr. Roger Dataller, which show, in an informative manner, the attempt to destroy Arkwright's spinning machine, the stealing of Huntsman's steel formula, and the resentment caused in the mines by Stephenson's safety lamp. Despite careful writing, these tiny plays scarcely grip as they should, but for some centres they should be useful and they are not difficult to present. Two other

books are "telescoped" versions of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "She Stoops to Conquer," and are seen to be workmanlike affairs, once the inevitable shudder at the compression of delightfully familiar masterpieces is suppressed.

"Puppetry and Puppet Plays" by Mr. Arthur B. Allen is designed for schools, and displays a keen belief in utilising the play impulse of the child for educational purposes. Mr. Allen's enthusiasm is infectious, and one reads with pleasure of his method of teaching the art of puppetry and the value of the model theatre in class. The puppet plays which follow are, no doubt, useful examples of their kind, but Mr. Allen is more stimulating when describing his actual work. "New Plays for Boys and Girls," by Mr. A. I. L. King, is another book intended for class work in drama, and contains eleven well-considered little plays, giving opportunities for every child in the class to "go adventuring" as the author puts it. Both these books are illustrated; personally, we prefer those to Mr. King's plays, although they set an ambitious standard.

"THE ASCENT OF F.6."

The Mercury Theatre has brought it off again with Mr. Rupert Doone's really fine production of this poetical play by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. It is the tragic comedy of an idealist's success, and, as in a play by Shakespeare, there is something in it to appeal to every taste.

This "stop-press" note only permits us to mention for particular praise the acting of Mr. William Devlin. But almost all the other members of the caste are similarly deserving. Emphatically a play to see, and to see twice.

G. W.

HOLYWELL PLAYERS.

The Holywell Players have done well to revive, as they did recently at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, that little known play by Oliver Goldsmith, "The Good-Natured Man." This play, of course, does not show the author of "She Stoops to Conquer" at his best, yet it contains several amusing scenes and a variety of good acting parts.

We particularly liked Miss Barbara Seymour's performance of Mrs. Croaker, and that of Mr. W. C. Williams as Lofly had a quiet perfection which delighted the audience. Here was a performance of quite outstanding merit. Mr. Kenneth Johnstone provided a dignified Sir William Honeywood, and a word of special praise must be given to the décor which though extremely simple, was attractive and right in every detail.

LATEST RELEASES.

Current releases by Messrs. Samuel French, include "Tread Softly" by Peter Trill, "The Bishop Misbehaves" by Frederick Jackson, and "Call It A Day" by Dodie Smith. In connection with the last named, societies are reminded that representations of this play are not permitted in certain towns, and inquiries should first be made to Messrs. French, who will advise applicants as to whether the play is available or not.

The same publishers have just issued, at two shillings net, "Sophro the Wise" by Laurence Binyon. Described as "A play for Children and others in five Scenes," it has a low royalty of One Guinea per performance.

FESTIVAL ADJUDICATION

An Open Letter from Mr. Richard Southern

DEAR Mr. Whitworth,

It was with some trepidation that I accepted your very kind invitation to attend the conference of adjudicators in December last, for I wondered whether my views did not indicate that I should rather withdraw from adjudication altogether, since they take a line that in some respects differs from the rules of the Festival which I ought to accept.

Since, however, there were brought out at that meeting certain other views that show how very alive and kicking the whole problem is, and since because of them you then invited the statements of some in writing, I send you this letter.

I confess to begin with that I am unable—indeed I believe from all my life's experience that it is impossible—to arrive at any method of assessing a numerical value to a work of art. The merit of the work of art may be high or low, the impossibility remains. A numerical system (such as marking) is essentially material; only failure can attend an attempt to measure the immaterial by the concrete.

If we compromise far enough to allot to a purely hypothetical perfection the symbol of 100, and to a similarly unsurpassable degree of badness the symbol of 0, we are merely speaking in abstracts. We must not imagine that because we have postulated these abstracts we have miraculously made it clear what half-perfection is, so that we can label it 50. And I ask you, whatever can a single remove from half-perfection (that is 49) signify in actual art? Clearly the state of meriting 49 marks has no objective reality at all. It means nothing.

If a judge gives two plays 49 marks and 57 marks respectively, of course we take it he considers the second show better than the first, but we would surely not commit the fatal error of asserting that at another performance of these plays before another equally competent judge the two plays would again be allotted 49 and 57 marks respectively. Further, common sense says as surely that we must not expect in this second programme that the plays will even be placed in the same order.

It is here that so many thoughtless people boggle. Let us therefore take our eyes from the theatre for a moment and try to gain a fresher mind by inspecting another avenue. Let me pretend to pick four typical pictures from next year's Royal Academy exhibition and set them before Mr. A, an accredited art critic. Let me ask him to mark each picture under five specified heads and to criticise them all in the presence of the artists. Three weeks later imagine me submitting them to Mr. B., an equally accredited art critic. Can any one really expect the same allotment of marks as before? Can anyone even suppose there is any certainty at all that the pictures will be placed in the same order? Uncertain as the issue must obviously be, let me introduce a very important complication—suppose I give every artist full permission to spend as much of his spare time in the three weeks as he will in altering his picture to include such of Mr. A's emendations as he considers helpful and repairing whatever errors his critic convinced him of. What then are the chances of the same order resulting from the second marking?

Further, consider that a picture, as a work, remains between inspections (at any rate if these take place at reasonable intervals) in every respect identical, but that two presentations of a given theatrical show depend (especially among amateurs) upon such human elements and such incommensurable subtleties of mood and temper that it is quite possible to ask even a professional actor after a show, "How did it go to-night?" and to have as reply, "Foul." upon one night, and, "My boy, grand," on another.

Now impose upon these already numerous causes of variation a strange audience (that is, an audience not habitual to that theatre or company), and beyond that a theatre different in size, acoustics, equipment, lighting, accommodation, and staff—with a journey of totally strange nature to reach it for the evening—and how can any reasonable mind ask for consistence and—Heaven help us!—the same number of marks or the same order between teams?



PRIZE MODEL OF A STAGE SET FOR ACT II,
 "THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA" MADE BY ELNA
 PAULET. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 1 ft.



MR. BENJAMIN POLLOCK, LAST OF THE
ENGLISH TOY THEATRE MAKERS.
From a photograph taken on his 80th
birthday in his shop at Hoxton, by
W. Ziemsen. *See article on page 94.*

FESTIVAL ADJUDICATION

The British Drama League would be failing in its duty to the theatre if for one moment it fostered a belief that such inconsistency is not as inevitably a part of the game as are the uncertainties of cricket.

What then, you may ask me, is the standpoint from which I adjudicate, if it is not marks? It is (in theory) simple. I judge the show as a show, and I am always much indebted to the audience for helping me. I may possibly disagree with the audience, if so I shall tell them where; but the show without their live presence would not exist as a creative thing. In the long run it is upon the assessment of how far the show gets over the footlights to an audience, including myself, that I as a judge base my judgement.

So I am not worried by the vexed "choice of play"—I consider it virtually meaningless. If the company makes a good show it makes a good show, and that is theatre. If it fails it fails, however "suitable" the script to the cast, or however full of intrinsic qualities. Of course such an attitude covers the content of a play, because if the content is trashy or distasteful in the extreme, it will not "get" the audience, whereas, be it light as emptiness itself or heavy with the deepest profundities, if it is put over the footlights, then all honour to the company. They have done their job.

We know moreover of countless performances in history and in the present world where no play exists at all: the quality of the show itself is its own justification. There, in my view, is theatre.

It is for such reasons as these that I dislike to read the play before I see the show. I consider the play no concern of mine or any adjudicator. Once let him form, hurriedly as he must, an opinion of the meaning of the script and the style of presentation it demands, and his judgement of the show is coloured by his preconception. *And there is more than one way to produce any script.*

Once we have adjudicators expounding their own interpretation of a script against that of the producer, we shall risk propagating the feeling that there is a "right way" to produce any play.

Should it be argued that an adjudicator has been known to say "I could not understand what this bit was about, since I had no previous study of the script," I would reply, "Thank your stars for an honest adjudicator. If one has to read your script before one can

appreciate your show—Heaven help the audience who have paid honest money."

Where the question of an obscure dialect enters, I would suggest that if a criticism of detailed points is demanded it is folly to invite an adjudicator who cannot understand the dialect and the idiom: even if he reads the play beforehand he cannot help you with your problems of expression or shades of character. But apart from all that, any company worth its salt should welcome the task of working so worthily as to put their show over the footlights even if it is in "Greek." It will be a very interesting job of theatre and one which really invites a cast to learn its job.

So I summarise my points:

I do not believe a system of numbers allotted to shows can be anything but a relative guide to their quality.

That inconsistency in the placing of shows by different judges on different occasions is no inconsistency in fact.

That a preliminary study of the script may be quite legitimately refused by a judge.

To be drawn from these is the final conclusion that attainment to and performance at the London Final after a number of preliminary rounds is of far less importance than a show at a local centre whose quality shall rouse the adjudicator to a keen, interested, lucid, valuable and constructive ten minutes on the stage afterwards.

And that goes for adjudicators as well as companies.

Yours very sincerely,

RICHARD SOUTHERN.

P.S. Do let us call them "companies" and not "teams" they are in a theatre not a relay race!

It will be remembered that in a recent number of "Drama" we mentioned the Stop-Watches manufactured by Messrs. A. Arnold and Co., which should be very useful to those whose duty it is to attend to the timing of festival plays. A normal type of Racing Recorder is sold for 25s. There is also a wrist stop-watch at 15s., and an Appointment Alarm watch at 25s. This watch, which is perhaps the most useful for stage purposes, has an ordinary dial, with minute hand, but with the addition of an alarm bell. If the alarm is properly set at the rise of the curtain, the time-keeper or judge can safely forget all about the time limit until his attention is called by the ringing of the bell. All the models mentioned may be obtained at the stated prices, post free, from the new address of the Company, 19, Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.1.

OUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY

By Hilary Kane

A GOOD deal is written at this time of year about the numerous amateur dramatic societies which have come into being during the last few years, and whose focal point is the annual Festival held by the British Drama League.

Great stress is laid by these writers on the friendships which can be formed in such societies, and the helpful, happy spirit in which members tackle the most uninteresting jobs, such as holding the prompt book and hearing members of the cast stumble through their parts.

Now I have belonged in my time to three societies. Probably I was unlucky; but the fact remains that I have never come across anyone who was in the least anxious to hear me my part or even cared very much whether or not I knew it, so long as I was not acting opposite him or her.

Another thing which these writers cheerfully assume is that members realise when they cannot act, and go quietly away to make scenery or collect "props."

They don't. At least that is my experience. There is no fool who rushes in more cheerfully where actors fear to tread than the average amateur aspirant; and they won't take a hint. You tell them kindly that they can't be heard, that they are too tall, too short, too fair, too dark, any mortal thing except the brutal truth that they haven't the slightest idea of acting; and they continue to tell you cheerfully that they don't think that matters—they saw Jean Forbes-Robertson do it, and *she* was dark. Finally they realise that they are being left out of show after show and retire hurt, feeling they have flung their pearls before swine. And if you write suggesting that you're sure they would prompt or collect props beautifully, you waste a three-half-penny stamp.

Usually there are about three people in a society who can really act. Naturally, you want to give them the best parts; and equally naturally the other members get extremely restive; till it seems to be a case of spoiling the show or breaking up the Club.

The average amateur has two faults; either it can act certain parts and wants to do the exact opposite; or it will only act a part in which it can look nice on the stage. These

faults apply equally to men and women. We had a girl who was excellent as a comic cockney, and one of her yearnings was to do a part which only Yvonne Arnaud could have played. And we grew so tired of being tactful about it.

Does no one else ever come up against these difficulties; and if they do, how do they deal with them effectively and yet keep the offenders in the club?

Yet hope springs eternal... we have entered for the Festival again... and I *know* the question of a scene from the "Improper Duchess" will be put forward once more....

"DOCTOR MY BOOK."

In a recent issue of "World Radio" it is stated that "Doctor My Book," by Alicia Ramsey (Mrs. de Cordova) and Rudolph de Cordova, can lay claim to having been broadcast from the largest number of stations in the world. Available statistics show that "Doctor Abernethy: his Book"—to use its English broadcast title—has been broadcast from twenty-one cities, thirteen in English-speaking and eight in foreign countries, while it has been accepted, but not yet produced in others. It has been "on the air" from London stations on several occasions, and from the Regions as well as from Dublin, Belfast, Cape Town, Sydney, the four chief cities in New Zealand, and from Ottawa, Buffalo and New York. Foreign Broadcasting stations, from which "Doctor My Book" has been transmitted in various languages, include Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Prague, Budapest, Warsaw and Vienna.

The stage version of "Doctor My Book" has achieved deserved popularity with Drama League societies, and has proved an excellent Festival choice.

A ONE-ACT PLAY WITH LOW ROYALTY.

"HIS LADY SECRETARY" by COMPTON IRVING.
(Ye King's Stone Press. 1s. 6d.)

On the resignation of his male secretary, Roger Cremorne, a best-seller novelist, engages, as successor, Janet Morgan, whose charm is far superior to her secretarial qualifications. Cremorne, however, perseveres with her, despite the malicious scheming of his sister, Mrs. Grey, who has ruled the Cremorne ménage for some years. The inevitable happens: Cremorne and his charming secretary become engaged, and Mrs. Grey is unmasked as a schemer of the deepest dye.

An actable light comedy, simply staged, and with a low performing royalty of one and a half guineas for the first performance, and one guinea for each subsequent presentation. The play was originally produced at the West Cliff Gardens Theatre, Clacton, with an all professional cast.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE SUSSEX FULL-LENGTH DRAMA FESTIVAL.

A second, most successful, Full-length Play Festival has ended in Sussex, organised by the County Drama Committee of the Sussex Rural Community Council, which acts also as the County Committee of the B.D.L. Societies were divided into two Groups ('experienced' and less experienced), and were adjudicated at their local performances by Mr. Neil Porter and Mr. Arthur Ewart. Unfortunately, owing to structural alterations, it was not possible again to hold the finals at Glyndebourne Opera House.

The two leading teams from each Group appeared at Lewes. These were The Lewis Players in "Libel" and The Crowborough Players in "Genius at Home," of the First Group, and The Barnstormers in "Barnet's Folly" and The Southwick Players in "Young Shoulders." Other competing Societies were the Ashington Players, Bognor Regis Players, Florence Moore Players, Henfield Players, Mayfield Players, Mid-Sussex Players, Newick A.D.S. and the Cuckmere Valley Players. In the Second Group were the Conrose Players, Burgess Hill A.D.S., Hurstmonceux A.D.S. and the Hassocks Players.

In summing up, Mr. Neil Porter, after criticising the choice of plays, said "The standard of acting was very mixed: it varied from excellent, good, adequate, to poor. The performances which stand out in my memory were the two Counsels in "Libel," both brilliantly played, and the performance of Jane Carlyle in "Genius at Home." Finally, the last impression I have of the Festival is the varying audiences. In one or two places the audiences as a whole were obviously not interested in the drama—only in the individual performances of their friends. In other places the audiences were alert and interested in every department of the art of the theatre, and they and the players between them created the most stimulating atmosphere. It is evenings such as these which repay the adjudicator a thousandfold."

Mr. Arthur Ewart dealt at the Finals principally with Choice of Play—"one of the greatest problems which Amateur Societies have to face." It is hoped to publish his authoritative advice on the subject which will then be available on application to the Sussex R.C.C., Old Bank House, Lewes.

TOOTING CO-OPERATORS

"MAJOR BARBARA."

Bernard Shaw's "Major Barbara" was recently presented by the Tooting Dramatic Society of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society at St. Peter's Hall, Beechcroft Road, Upper Tooting. The play was under the direction of Kathleen Rich. The players were given a good reception by the large attendance, and the acting was of high standard. Especially good was Arthur Messenger's interpretation of the part of Andrew Undershaft, the "munitions king," with a Salvation Army Officer as a daughter. Lilian Ventham was a charming "army" lassie (Major Barbara), and Daphne Turner was excellent as Lady Undershaft.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

THE WHITE HORSE CLUB, FEBRUARY 11TH-14TH.

The White Horse Club, Waterloo, stands in one of the poorest and roughest districts of London, and for many years has done very difficult pioneer work there: it carries on many activities with next to no money but with a great deal of devoted enthusiasm. The clergy of St. John's, who work with it, have always had a great belief in the essential value of good drama to the community, and the dramatic history of this Club has in the past included "Holy Night," some Nativity plays, and an original mime on Saint Joan.

"The Kingdom of God" was perhaps the most difficult choice it has yet made, but the performance fully justified the choice, by showing difficulties surmounted with spirit and courage and a fine play acted with sincere feeling—and played to an audience that followed every line, that did not laugh in the wrong places, but that appreciated the real humour and beauty of it thoroughly,—a grand audience—but after all, one that has the Old Vic in its midst!

The very large cast of this play allowed for the introduction of a considerable part of the community; some of the old pensioners were played by the Grandfathers' Club, there was a real negro as Liboriatu, and the crowd of little boys and girls was as vital, humorous and engaging as only little Cockney boys and girls know how to be. The production (by Clarice Collins) was careful, showing imagination and variety. "Sister Gracia" made a promising beginning, but did not develop her part in the later scenes, relying too much on her beauty and an aristocratic manner to get her through, and most of the players flagged during their long speeches, losing emotional force for lack of climaxes. The grouping and movement were not always happy, but the handling of the crowd of children was excellent throughout.

The Boys' Club had designed and made the scenery, and, though it didn't always stick together, it showed good feeling for harmony and decoration; the Girls' Club, which had put together the costumes, had made ingenious use of everything they could get hold of.

The whole evening was enjoyable and enjoyed—the White Horse Club gets more out of its membership than "White's," I am convinced.

MARY KELLY.

TRECYNON A.D.S.

The Trecynon Amateur Dramatic Society have recently produced with success "Castle Garth," a play in three acts by Florence Howell. This play recently won the Alistair Wilson Cup Competition.

The Little Theatre, Aberdare, seems in a flourishing condition, and publishes an excellent programme containing besides the usual particulars of the play, a variety of interesting contributions.

SOUTHEND.

Productions at the Talza Repertory Theatre for March include "Arms and the Man," "Scotch Mist" by Sir Patrick Hastings, "Behold We Live" by John Van Druten, "The Berg" by Ernest Raymond, and "Proscenium" by Ivor Novello.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

"PANACHE."

A dramatic company under the attractive title of "Panache" gave an inaugural performance at the Rudolf Steiner Hall on February 11. This Company is available for entertainments to provide programmes for any occasion from fifteen minutes to two hours, with two to ten artists. Enquiries should be addressed to Miss Nancy Hume, 45, Inverness Terrace, W.2.

The programme offered the other night consisted of sixteen items very diverse in character, and comparable perhaps to Bahleff's "Chauve Souris."

Many of the items consisted of traditional songs in Medieval or Chinese costume, and there was something to please every taste, from the slightly *risqué* "Lullaby for a Modern Baby" by Archie Harradine, to the charming "Voyage a Bethléem" adapted from a fifteenth century ballad.

Miss Victoria Kingsley acted and sang in several items with delightful effect. Her musical scene "A Backwater in Bayswater" was unusual and witty.

"INTERFERENCE."

To produce this story of bigamy and blackmail in the primness and austerity of the Conway Hall requires great courage; to make it at all convincing requires almost superhuman skill. The Bonhomie Players battled bravely with it, but they are not as yet sufficiently experienced for sophistication of this kind. Their slowness of attack made the play somewhat drag; and it was only when the scene changed from the formal intimacy of the doctor's drawing room, to the less formal intimacy of the blackmailer's boudoir—that the play seemed to gain interest. This was mainly due to the spirited acting of Vera Banks as Deborah Kane and Juan Frapnell as Philip Voaze, who displayed great skill and understanding.

PHILIP L. LORRAINE.

THE PLAYERS THEATRE.

Two programmes of one-act plays and variety were given last month on subsequent Sundays. The first included a delightful sketch by Leonard Sachs of a Jewish father telling his child a fairy story, and an exquisite rendering of the "Song of Solomon" by Margaret Leona. "Her Affairs in Order" by Mada Gage Bolton won the International one-act play competition recently. A tragic story of the lives and loves of four sisters in a small American town, it is full of pathos and irony, and was acted with great sincerity and restraint by almost the original cast. The Japanese No Play "Suma Genji" had a peculiar charm of its own, and the choreography arranged and performed by Margaret Leona was gracefully effective. Ivor Brown's "I made you possible" is an interesting homily on the material liberty of modern woman—rather than a play.

The second programme commenced with "Laura, the do-as-you-like girl," a brilliant trifle by eleven years old Ann Ridgeway. In six short scenes she comically depicts the reactions of the adult world to the whims of a wilful young miss, and with a simplicity almost satiric exposes its conduct to our grown-up gaze.

Stories of foolish husbands and foolish wives are interesting only if they are entertaining. "Folly of Faith," by Michael Rayne was neither; and its lengthy wordiness was only partially relieved by the clever affectations of Janet Burnell as an over-stupid wife.

Pirandello's "House with the column" is a straightforward story of Sicilian peasant life. But it depends for its effect on the narrative powers of one character. In the experienced and capable hands of Louise Hampton the play came quickly to life as she brilliantly unfolded the dreadful experiences of a memorable past.

PHILIP L. LORRAINE.

G.P.O. PLAYERS.

"DISTINGUISHED GATHERING."

When the distinguished gathering realise that their distinguished lives are due for extinction by the publication of certain memoirs, they decide to murder the memoirist. To convince the audience that the characters will react in this manner, is the most difficult point in the play. In this respect the G.P.O. Player was extremely fortunate in securing the services as producer of James Parish, the author himself. The dialogue was crisp and alert and the action swift and well-timed. But there was a tendency to group characters with their back to the audience—permissible it is admitted but it caused a lot of inaudibility—and there was a certain lack of intensity in some scenes, due perhaps to a fear of over-acting.

The G.P.O. Players possess an extraordinarily fine collection of actors and are much to be congratulated.

PHILIP L. LORRAINE.

PLYMOUTH.

In January, at the Globe Theatre, Royal Marine Barracks, Mrs. Arthur Picken produced, with great success, two plays, "Cinderella" and "The Christmas Party," written by herself. The programme also included "Jennifer's Dream"—a ballet by Barbara Cave Insall, "A Room in the Tower" by Hugh Stewart, and "Culbin Sands" by Gordon Bottomley. All the plays were produced by Mrs. Arthur Picken.

BROADSTAIRS.

With the exceptional interest which the public are taking at present in Singapore as a British naval base, we would like to draw attention to the first performance of a new play, "England's Eastern Gate" by G. Winifred Taylor to be produced by Vincent Pearmain with the Island Players at Bohemia, Broadstairs, on April 6th and 7th at 8 o'clock, and, by invitation, at the St. Pancras People's Theatre, London, on April 10th, both afternoon and evening.

"England's Eastern Gate" is an early 19th century play, which depicts Sir Stamford Raffles as the man with vision, who, first as English Governor of Java (1811-1816) and later as the founder of Singapore (1819) opened the gate to England in the East.

The Island Players are a Thanet Company of all classes, creeds, occupations and ages, who present a yearly historical or scriptural play, and who probably are best known outside their own district for the production by Vincent Pearmain of "Joseph of Arimathea" at St. Pancras People's Theatre in 1933 and in the Chapter House at Canterbury Cathedral in 1934.

ves an
olly of
engthy
clever
wife.
raight-
pende
aracter.
Louise
lilianly
le past.
LINE.

t their
publi-
der the
char-
difficult
er were
educat
alogues
well-
rs with
ed but
ertain
a feat

ly firm
ulated.
LINE.

Marion
great
ristman
so in-
a Cave
ewart,
. All
n.

ic an
base,
t per-
ce" by
Pear-
stain.
ation.
Apri

entury
man
Java
'1819)

of all
ent a
bably
pro-
then"
n the



ST. PANCRAS PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Charrington Street, Crowndale Road, N.W.1

TEL: EUSTON 1769

Under the Direction of EDITH NEVILLE
Producer and Manager PHYLLIS KINDERSLEY

MARCH PERFORMANCES, 1937

EVENINGS at 8.0 p.m.

4th, 5th and 6th
Goethe's Faust

adapted by Graham and
Tristan Rawson

11th, 12th and 13th
Four Plays of St. Clare ... Laurence Housman

18th, 19th and 20th
Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury
Charles Williams

Reserved Seats: numbered, 2/6. Unnumbered 1/6.
Admission 7d.

Transferable Ticket for the same seat for the ten plays,
2/6 seat 15/-, 1/6 seat 12/6 7d. seat 5/-

Special Play Production Course, including classes in Acting,
Elocution, Stage Dancing, Stage Deportment, Make-up, etc.

Vacancies for men and women of experience
and ability for Amateur Repertory Company.

Send stamp for prospectus to:

The Business Manager, St. Pancras People's Theatre,
Ltd., at the above address. Interviews by appointment.

VOICE PRODUCTION :: DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

VERSE SPEAKING :: ADJUDICATIONS

PLAYS PRODUCED :: RECITALS

LAURA SMITHSON

L.R.A.M. Elocution Double Diploma, M.R.S.T.
Of Principal West-end Theatres and "Old Vic,"
Shakespeare Co.

IVY SMITHSON

(Local Representative, The Guildhall School of Music
and Drama and the Poetry Society (Incorp.)

Communications to:—

102 Abbey Road Mansions, N.W.8, and
1 Ropner Terrace, Stockton-on-Tees, Co. Durham.

LITTLE THEATRE, CITIZEN HOUSE, BATH,

AND

EVERYMAN THEATRE, HAMPSTEAD, N.W.3

Easter School of Art of Acting and Play Production,
Everyman Theatre, Hampstead, March 25th to April 4th.
Thoroughly practical Course held in actual Theatre under pro-
fessional producers. Special Plays and Mimes suitable for
Coronation Festivities produced. Acting parts guaranteed.
Public performances. Course Fee, 25 Guineas.

Sunday Course of Art of Acting now running Everyman
Theatre, Hampstead. Membership available any time.

Beautiful Stage Costumes, all periods, sizes, Corsets,
Scenery, Properties, available on loan at inexpensive rates.

Dramatic Library containing every published play.
Annual subscription 5/- for which any number of books may
be borrowed. Free Advisory Bureau.

Pageants written and produced for Coronation Festivities.
For particulars apply Hon. Sec., Little Theatre, Citizen
House, Bath, enclosing stamped envelope.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

ELEVENTH EASTER DRAMA SCHOOL

April 16th to 23rd

preceded by

A THREE DAY COURSE ON DRAMA IN THE SCHOOL

for Teachers and Producers of School Plays

April 13th to 16th

at King's College of Household and Social Science,

Camden Hill Road, W.8.

DAY AND EVENING SESSIONS

RESIDENCE AT THE COLLEGE

STAFF:

SCHOOL COURSE

MR. RODNEY BENNETT
MR. HOWARD HAYDEN

GENERAL COURSE

MR. MICHAEL MACOWAN
MR. NORMAN MARSHALL

MISS HELGA BURGESS

Prospectus from the Schools Organizer, British Drama League,

9 FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

Please mention "Drama" when replying to Advertisements.

Chas. H. FOX Limited

184 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1.

Telegrams: Theatricals, Westcent, London.

Established over 60 years

Telephone: Holborn 9557-9.

Theatrical Costumiers & Wig Makers.

COSTUMES & WIGS ON HIRE FOR ALL OPERAS & DRAMATIC PLAYS

QUALITY, CORRECTNESS, CLEANLINESS, SERVICE.

WRITE FOR ESTIMATES

SPECIAL TERMS TO BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

HESSIAN—FIRE-PROOFED—PREPARED ESPECIALLY FOR

STAGE CURTAINS IN ROLLS OF 50 YDS. APPROX. 72" WIDE

Neutral Grey, £4-5-0, Dead Black, £4-2-6, Natural, £2-7-6, per Roll

CASH WITH ORDER.

CARRIAGE PAID IN GREAT BRITAIN.

SAMPLES ON APPLICATION.

REYNOLDS & PARNELL, 183, Desborough Rd., HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

BOOKSHOP

FOR QUICK SERVICE

'Phone: EUSTON 2666

PLAYS AND BOOKS SUPPLIED

AT THE SHORTEST NOTICE

9, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

EMBASSY SCHOOL OF ACTING

EMBASSY THEATRE, Swiss Cottage, N.W.3

A limited number of young men
and women selected for full time
**TRAINING in ACTING and
STAGE MANAGEMENT.**

AUDITIONS for the Summer

Term will be held in April.

Ring up or write to the School Secretary for an
appointment and particulars. PRIMROSE 6666

FILM ART

The Quarterly that sets a new
Standard in Criticism

I shall certainly see to it that all
my friends become acquainted with
your marvellous magazine and shall
do everything in my power to see
that your circulation is increased,
for such a deserving magazine should
and must eventually take its place
in the top rank of magazines.

**EDWARD A. BLATT,
PARAMOUNT PICTURES INC.
NEW YORK.**

A Publication of the Anglo-American Publishing and Distributing
Co. of London and New York.

THE STUDIOS, 5 STEYNINGS WAY, LONDON, N.12

One Shilling

